

~~PAN/1003/HA~~
file DCI

Note for file.

Mr. Proctor requested that copies be sent to
OSR, OER, CRS, and OCI with a note on the
buckslip:

The attached was sent to the Director

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This was done on 30 October 1975.

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Date: 8 September 1975

Client:

Case:

From:

To: File

Re:

Action:

On Saturday, 6 September, we invited to our home for dinner a girl named who had just been released from Vietnam within the previous few days,

Of course, her background has given her a particular point of view, and you should consider that while she is part Vietnamese, certainly she identifies much more with

She said that since she had passport (and probably also because , she was never really in doubt that she could eventually leave, although the delay and frustrations in dealing with the Immigration Department, she said, finally had a very depressing effect on her. She said that almost all of the people in the Immigration offices, at least the people who dealt with the public, were not regular former RVN government civil servants, but were "their own people", although she believed that other persons within the Immigration Department were regular former Vietnamese civil servants.

She said that most of the other government offices were functioning and were utilizing the former government civil servants. Among other things, she said the post office was operating and staffed by the same former civil servants. She said she thought it would soon be possible to send mail directly to and from Saigon, but that this was being delayed until new government stamps are issued.

Telephones are working again, and she said that shortly after the surrender, the new government asked all people working for the water company, electric company, telephone office and other public utilities to come back. She said that certain buildings are air-conditioned, and I assume that there are other regular services.

She said the city is being kept clean principally by students.

School has not reconvened and she did not know when it would.

There are very few cars on the streets, because gasoline is very expensive. I think she said about \$VN 1000 per liter.

The official rate of exchange is still \$VN 755 to \$US 1.00 but the black market is flourishing and money is exchanged in US\$ 100 notes at the rate of about \$VN 2,600 \$US 1.00 (buying or selling) and about \$VN 2,000 to 1 for lesser denominations. She said the Indians run the black market.

She said that while they initially told foreigners that the new government would respect the rights of private property, in fact they have not, having taken over many businesses, [REDACTED]

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STAT She said that many [REDACTED] who initially stayed behind now want to leave.

She said that many industries -- foreign and Vietnamese -- have been taken over by the government, and I believe that she included in that the Banque de l'Indochine because she used the example that the Manager of the Bank was now making \$VN 10,000 per month, as were the cleaning ladies at the Bank. Apparently the Michelin rubber plantations have also been taken over, and Vinatexco and Vinatexfinco.

She said that no one knew now where people such as Big Minh, Lawyer Dzu, Madame Ngo Ba Thanh, Father Thanh and other anti-Thein -- so-called Third Force people -- were. (In fact, however, I have also read that at least Big Minh has been seen and is free to move around the city).

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STAT She said that she was aware of some telex or cable exchanges which were either sent to or by [REDACTED] Embassy whereby the Vietnamese were asking for [REDACTED] technical assistance with respect to oil development.

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[REDACTED]

She said that many people have gone away on re-education/indoctrination trips, but that she has never seen anyone who has come back, although she did say that apparently friends and relatives have received letters from people who have gone away. In this regard, she also said that many people had been promised land and other things in the provinces if they would leave Saigon to resettle there. She said that, in fact, some had gone and found that things were not as promised, and have had to sneak back to Saigon and to remain hidden there.

She said that the police disappeared shortly after the surrender and that there were no police in evidence for some weeks. Recently, she said, police have reappeared in pink-like colored uniforms, and while she had not spoken to any of them, they all appeared to be North Vietnamese to her.

I should add that she speaks fluent Vietnamese, [REDACTED] is very good.

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She said that Foremost Dairies is still operating, but that they will shortly run out of product and are expected to close. She said that, at one point, one small can of condensed milk was selling for \$VN 800 each.

She said that rice is selling now for about \$VN 200 per liter. I do not know what quality that is, and [REDACTED] believed that this was about the price of rice about 2 years ago.

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She said that the Cercle Sportif has fallen into disuse. Grass is high all over, and soldiers are now using the swimming pool to wash their clothes and they hang them to dry around the pool. She said that the foyer has been given over to an exhibition of Ho Chi Minh's life -- picture, statues, and the like.

I asked whether any harsh treatment had been shown to people who had worked for American companies. She gave the example of a Vietnamese who had worked for [REDACTED] which company transported arms and ammunition. She said that he had been detained for questioning, released, and that he was walking about now as normal. She said she didn't think that Vietnamese who worked for foreign companies were being singled out for special unfavorable treatment.

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She said that she believed [] was still in Saigon. There were many other people I wanted to ask her about, but I doubt that she would know most of them.

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She said there is a limit to what people can draw out of the bank. We were interrupted and I did not pursue that. (Note, that there were about ten people at our house at the time and everyone was asking her questions one after another, and it was difficult to pursue any line of questioning.)

The South Vietnamese piaster is still in use, and the North Vietnamese dong is was not traded or widely in use in the South. No money has been overprinted, and the money is in every respect the same as it was before the surrender. She said also that US dollars, principally, but also [] pass very freely.

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She said that corruption is evident in certain areas. For example, she said that some of the "be dois", the word she says the North Vietnamese foot soldiers call themselves (and is the equivalent of "GI"), have indicated that, for a price, they can arrange to let Vietnamese out of the country. She said there are others who have indicated that for a price they will see what they can do to release monies which are in the bank in a particular person's account. Incidentally, apparently only the National Bank is now operating. She said she is very doubtful that in fact Vietnamese can leave this way. She said she knew of only one case of a Vietnamese leaving the country "officially", it being a Vietnamese, resident in Cambodia, who was caught in Vietnam by accident on 30 April.

She said that all of the movie houses are now compelled to show only propaganda style films, and that she has seen one or two of these Russian and North Vietnamese anti-French and anti-American films. The movie houses surprisingly are still all air-conditioned but, she says, very few people go to them now.

The old National Assembly building has now been converted into a stage, where mostly live North Vietnamese theater is featured.

She said that the Caravelle, the Continental Palace, and the Majestic Hotels are all open. She said most of the visiting dignitaries from the socialist-bloc countries stay at the Majestic. Most of the meetings of the Government, she said, are held at the Continental Palace.

She said a group of visiting dignitaries from various Communist countries was recently in Saigon and as one of the features of their visit was to be taken to the black market (thieves market) where they promptly bought up all kinds of cassettes, radios, cameras, etc., which had been looted from homes, PX's and the like after the surrender.

She said that Ramuchos and the Viet-My Restaurant were still open and functioning but were now under government control. In the case of the Viet-My, she said that every evening a government car comes by and picks up the profits. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] is now operating it.

The curfew is 2400 - 0500 hours. She said that almost every night one can hear gunfire, some of which goes on for extended periods. She said that whenever she asks what it is, she is told that it is thieves. However, she says on the basis of other information she has heard, she doubts that this is true.

There are now two daily newspapers function, and two radio stations, at least one of which is FM. There is TV for two hours everyday -- propaganda cartoons.

She said that when the Communists first moved into Saigon, there were public executions of thieves they caught. However, apparently the public did not accept this and this practice has been discontinued.

She said that it is quite common now for Vietnamese from the North who have been separated from their families who moved South in 1954, to be reunited with them in Saigon. She said the newspapers now contain ads placed by families looking for other family members. She said many Northerners have come to Saigon and have met their families. She also said, on the basis of conversations with them or talking with other people, that they are completely surprised to find how prosperous Saigon was and how well people lived. She said that by comparison the story of life in Hanoi is that it is very difficult. Food is rationed and basic commodities require coupons. She said most Northerners who come can only stay 10 to 15 days and then must go back. She said that, to date, she knows of no Saigonaise allowed to visit relatives in Hanoi.

She said that the North Vietnamese soldiers are all very young looking -- 15 or 16 years or perhaps 20 at the most. She said that when they came into the city, they were completely wide-eyed about what they saw. She said that the street vendors have exploited them the same way they

exploited the French and American soldiers. She said many of these boys can be seen walking around the streets with a watch and/or a radio. She said that the watches are not good watches, and that the people who were making a good living now were the watch repair people.

She also said that the sharp money changers who used to substitute 20-piaster notes for 500-piaster notes for the innocent GIs changing money at favorable rates, were still operating, and were doing the same thing to the bo dois changing NVN money into SVN money.

There were many amusing stories of the young NVA seeing Saigon for the first time. For example, she said some had never seen toilets. One group used the toilet to wash their rice and fish while urinating on the floor. On flushing the toilet, they would rush down-stairs to see where the fish or rice had gone.

She said that in recent weeks there have been only two vessels that have visited Saigon, one was a Russian ship and the other an East German ship. She said the crew was assigned to stay in the Majestic Hotel, and each was assigned one translator escort who had to go with them everywhere.

She said that the senior North Vietnamese army officers were billeted in the Miramar Hotel and the soldiers in the Brinks.

She said that while there has never been any decree concerning dress, it is now very conservative and almost no Vietnamese women wear the traditional ao-dai anymore. They wear baggy pajamas. She also said that boys now wear short hair.

She said that generally speaking, the North Vietnamese she dealt with were polite. She said that the North Vietnamese seem to go out of their way to be polite to the Americans who are still there and that, in fact, the Americans are probably treated better than the South Vietnamese.

She said there is no question that the country is being completely run by the North Vietnamese.

She said that many of the French teachers who came from France to teach at Marie Curie are still there and some want to remain. She said she does not know that they will do.

She said that there are French doctors still at the Hospital Grall, but that most of them want to leave. Accordingly, she said she believed the Grall Hospital will probably close in November.

She said that, by and large, churches were still open and people could go except that the chapel at the Grail Hospital has been ordered closed. She said that the Cathedral now only has perhaps half the number of people in it at regular services.

She said that coffee-houses were still open when she left and said that most people who had money to go to coffee shops went to the Civial and Brodards, although La Pagode was also open. She said that generally the same fare was served and that croissants, bread, and the like were all available. She said that beer was plentiful, and not expensive because BGI was still open and operating.

She said you have to ask for permission to go everywhere. Foreigners, including herself, are not allowed to leave Saigon and, even within Saigon, perhaps permission to move about has to be requested. I'm not certain of this latter point, but base it on her statement that she had to have an escort when she went from downtown Saigon to the airport when she caught her plane. She also said that Vietnamese could leave the city but they, too, had to ask permission, and it might or might not be granted depending upon whether they had a good reason.

She said that dog meat was now openly for sale. This seemed to repulse her but, of course, dog meat is a North Vietnamese delicacy. Generally, she said that food is available and that people were not going hungry, but that there was not a great deal of economic activity.

Of ten adult people previously working she said that probably three people are now working and that maybe one or more of those three was a government employee.

She said that many people were resigned to their new life as they had no choice but to accept it. Of course, she was referring principally to the foreign-oriented Vietnamese community. I am sure that she is not a good source to know actually how a very large segment of the population accepts their new condition.

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☐ said that when the Communists took over they freed everyone in jail. She also said that she knew of one case of a Vietnamese who was caught trying to escape from Vietnam and was jailed for five weeks. She said she also had a personal friend, ☐ who got into an argument with an official and was jailed for four weeks. (Actually, seems relatively humane)

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Approved For Release 2005/11/23 : CIA-RDP80B01495R000300080015-8

Approved For Release 2005/11/23 : CIA-RDP80B01495R000300080015-8